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Media Contact:

Dani Johnson, 410-299-1341

dani@aspecialgathering.com

ABFE Contact:

Erika Seth Davies, 443-765-4008

edavies@abfe.org

10 Exceptional Innovative Leaders Committed to Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities

Meet the 11th Class of ABFE Connecting Leaders Fellows

[September 12, 2016, New York, NY] ABFE, A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities today named its 2016 – 2017 class of Connecting Leaders Fellows, recognizing 10 exceptional leaders with track records as catalysts for change promoting effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities.

Fellows will each receive a year-long experience designed to offer customized executive leadership coaching, professional development, and personalized service learning projects in their own community. The seven women and three men have vast experience across a range of issue areas including racial and social justice, community engagement, healthcare advocacy, education reform, equitable grantmaking and management.

“Now more than ever before, foundation leaders must advance agendas for our community, and if necessary, should find the support needed to help them do so,” said Susan Taylor Batten, President and CEO, ABFE. “To transform philanthropy that is more responsive to our community takes bold leadership and a pipeline to retain Black professionals and advance career pathways for our up and coming Black leaders to respond to the needs of our communities.”

The ABFE Connecting Leaders Fellows work in diverse fields and across various disciplines. This year’s Fellows are:

Robert Adams, Jr., Strategic Leadership and Change Manager, NEA Foundation, Washington, DC

Tahira Cunningham, Program Officer, Sierra Health Foundation, Sacramento, CA

Robert L. Dortch, Jr., Director, Community Innovation, Robins Foundation, Richmond, VA

Caronina L. Grimble, Program Officer, Woods Fund Chicago, Chicago, IL

Kinah Harrison, Program Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI

Jeanné Isler, Vice President, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Washington, DC

Yolanda Knight, Program Director, Steans Family Foundation, Chicago, IL

Michelle L. McMurray, Sr. Program Officer, Health and Human Services, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Pittsburgh, PA

Meka Sales, Program Officer, Health Care, The Duke Endowment, Charlotte, NC

Murray L. Woodard, II, Program Officer, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Blue Springs, MO

Members of this class join 101 other ABFE Fellows whom the program has recognized since it launched in 2005. A selection committee comprised of CLFP Alumni and ABFE members reviewed application submissions and made final recommendations of the current class. Fellows were chosen based upon a set of criteria covering their experience in philanthropy, their goals for the future, and their interest and passion for making systemic change in Black communities. For a complete list of ABFE’s 2016 - 2017 Connecting Leaders Fellows, see attachment or visit ABFE.org.

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ABFE is a membership-based philanthropic organization that advocates for responsive and transformative investments in Black communities. Partnering with foundations, nonprofits and individuals, ABFE provides its members with professional development and technical assistance resources that further the philanthropic sector’s connection and responsiveness to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Established in 1971 as the Association of Black Foundation Executives, the organization was credited with many of philanthropy’s early gains in diversity. It since has evolved into an influential network. In 2013, the organization shed its descriptor and adopted the simpler ABFE (ab-fee) to better reflect its broadening membership. For more information, visit www.abfe.org.